UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.22
4 March 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
Fourth session
New York, 2 March-3 April 1992
Working Group III
Agenda item 3

PRINCIPLES ON GENERAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Rights and obligations

Proposal submitted by Japan

Preamble

1. The global environment is deteriorating. The changes taking place on earth now affect the atmosphere around it and have given rise to such ominous developments as global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer. This makes protection of the environment of the greatest urgency.

2. In developing countries, the rapid increase in population growth, poverty and the destruction of the environment constitute a vicious circle and are a serious threat to health and well-being. Accordingly, the issue of environment and development should be considered in this context.

3. To ensure the survival of humankind and the full diversity of living creatures in a sound global environment and so that we may pursue our common interests on a continuing basis, we should reconsider our current patterns of production, consumption and development. We should likewise move with resolution and determination to transform our societies and cultures, so that sustainable development becomes not merely a goal but a reality.

Principles

1. Integration of environment and development

States should make efforts to achieve sustainable development through the integration of environment and development, keeping in mind that these efforts can only be expected to bear fruit over the long term.

4. Responsibility to present and future generations

Today and in the future, the individual has both a fundamental right to benefit from the common resources of humankind, which constitute the global environment, and at the same time a responsibility to protect, restore and improve them for present and future generations.

5. Sovereignty and responsibility to others

Each State has the sovereign right to exploit its own resources in accordance with its own environmental policies. However, this right should not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with the goal of integrating development and environmental protection. States have the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environments of other States. They should therefore conduct environmental impact assessments on any projects whose effects may be felt beyond their own national boundaries, the results to be provided promptly to the States concerned.

8. Special needs of developing countries

States should strengthen their cooperation to support the efforts of developing countries to overcome poverty and remedy serious environmental damage, so that they may achieve sustainable development. In extending official development assistance, therefore, States should give due consideration to such matters as conservation of the environment of the areas to receive such assistance and the welfare of the indigenous people living there. These issues should likewise be given consideration in connection with direct investment to foreign countries.

18. Scientific understanding of the global environment

States should cooperate in international programmes devoted to systematic observation and scientific research and, each to the best of its ability, make efforts to develop greater scientific understanding of the global environment, the results to be reflected in the actions they subsequently take. Failure to arrive at complete scientific certainty, however, should not be used as an excuse for inaction or for postponing the implementation of measures to protect the global environment.

19. Technologies for sustainable development

States should cooperate to develop and diffuse environmentally sound technologies that will promote sustainable development. They should likewise strengthen national efforts and international cooperation in this area, including re-evaluation and improvement of existing technologies suitable for recipient countries and thereby promote effective transfer of technology.